

13.

FAREWELL LETTER

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM H. DE LANCEY, D. D.

TO THE

VESTRY AND CONGREGATION

OF

ST. PETER'S CHURCH.

May 2d, 1839.

PHILADELPHIA:

JESPER HARDING, PRINTER.

1839

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MAY 2D, 1839.

Rev. and Dear Sir:

We have been instructed to communicate to you the resolution which was adopted yesterday at a meeting of the vestry of St. Peter's Church.

In expressing our own sentiments of personal regard for you, and of sincere regret that a separation, under any circumstances whatever, should take place between yourself and your Philadelphia friends, we only represent the feelings of the whole congregation with which you have been so long and so intimately connected.

Understanding that you will be absent at the moment when your official relations cease, the vestry deemed it just to anticipate the actual close of your ministerial duties, by the record which has been made.

With great esteem and consideration, we are affectionately yours,

J. R. INGERSOLL,
JAMES S. SMITH,
I. ROACH,

Committee of the Vestry of St. Peter's Church.
Rev. Dr. WILLIAM H. DE LANCEY.

RESOLUTION.

RESOLVED, That the Vestry and Congregation of St. Peter's Church contemplate the approaching dissolution of their connection with the Rev. Dr. William H. De Laneey, with sentiments of deep emotion and concern. Relations have been cultivated between them, which have been at all times, we venture to believe, mutually satisfactory.

In parting with a valued and cherished friend, perhaps for ever, we are induced by motives of justice, gratitude, and affection, to bear testimony, as members of this Vestry, to his worth. A large and devoted flock has been guided by his wisdom, enlightened by his instruction, and encouraged by his example. It has uniformly relied upon his counsels, and adopted his principles as sound, christian-like, and orthodox. His zeal has been active and exemplary: his preaching eloquent: his manners urbane and amiable: his life and conversation, pure and dignified. We are aware that a profound sense of duty in the service of the great head of the Church, requires him to obey a call to a higher place in its holy councils, and to a wider sphere of usefulness.

Judging of the ability and usefulness which will characterize his future exertions by a long and well tried experience of the past, we anticipate for the diocese which he is about to receive under his spiritual charge, the happiest consequences. We offer him our affectionate and anxious wishes for every blessing, the sincere expression of our cordial esteem, and the intercession of our fervent prayers.

PHILADELPHIA, May 2, 1839.

TO JOSEPH R. INGERSOLL, JAMES S. SMITH, and ISAAC
ROACH, Esquires.

GENTLEMEN :

I have this morning received your note, accompanied by a copy of the very gratifying resolution adopted by the Vestry, in contemplation of my departure. I send herewith a letter, which I beg you to be the organ of conveying to the Vestry and Congregation of St. Peter's Church, in such mode as you shall deem most advisable.

The happy associations I have enjoyed in my pastoral connection with you, and the firm friendship of so many pious and excellent persons, added to the delightful personal intercourse with the Vestry and Congregation, and their very cheerful and harmonious co-operation in all my plans and efforts to promote the cause and Church of Christ, give acuteness to the pang of separation, which words are wholly inadequate to express.

I carry with me the remembrance of the uninterrupted affection, courtesy and friendship of yourselves, and of all my flock. Most truly and heartily are they reciprocated, as an honour and a happiness. I offer my cordial acknowledgments for them, with the assurance of my fervent prayers for divine blessings on yourselves personally, as on the Vestry and Congregation whom you represent. It is a source of peculiar gratification to me to find the painful

conviction of superior duty which separates me from a beloved flock, so fully estimated by them as the true cause of my being compelled, in saying farewell, to subscribe myself, no longer your pastor, but always

Your sincere and affectionate

friend and brother in Christ,

WILLIAM H. DE LANCEY.

TO THE VESTRY AND CONGREGATION OF ST. PETER'S
CHURCH.

My dear Brethren:

The period of my introduction into the new and important charge to which I have been elected having arrived, I now formally resign the rectorship of St. Peter's Church, according to the intimation of my letter to the Vestry in November last. The gratifying expressions of confidence and attachment which the Vestry have conveyed to me in the resolutions they have passed, and their high appreciation of my ministerial character and labours, while they affect me deeply, will serve to cheer and animate me in the duties and exertions of another and more extended sphere.

The emotions connected with my separation from a flock endeared to me by so many ties, are too strong to allow of my attempting to address to you a farewell discourse in person from the pulpit. I am induced, therefore, to express the feelings with which I take my leave, and the few counsels which I desire to offer, through the medium of this brief letter.

My first connection with this church dates as far back as March, 1822, since which time I have been for the most part officially connected, and always in close intimacy, with the great body of the members of the parish. It has been a period of uniform affection and kindness on your part, of patient bearing with my infirmities, of cordial sympathy in my trials, and of that harmonious and delightful pastoral intercourse which could not but rivet my affections to the parish. I came among you an entire stranger; I leave you with the conviction that I leave a

body of affectionate and tried friends and brethren in this community, of whose attachment any christian pastor may well be proud.

In my pastoral relations, I have to acknowledge the respectful attention with which my instructions have uniformly been received, the cheerful and prompt co-operation of the Vestry in all my plans for the spiritual welfare of the parish, and the liberal support by the congregation of every enterprise for the good of the Church which I have brought before them. Every where, and by all, my imperfect ministrations have been kindly received, and I have been highly esteemed "for my work's sake." The blessed Spirit of Peace has hovered over us during the whole period of our connection; and in union and harmony I have laboured with my Vestry, Sunday School teachers, and congregation, for the glory of God and the edification of the Church.

While in the review of my past labours, I cannot but discern abundant evidence of deficiencies and imperfections, yet I trust that I may appeal to you for the honesty and faithfulness with which I have endeavoured, by the grace of God, to set before you, both in conjunction with those who were my seniors and fellow-labourers, and also since the parish was entrusted to me singly, the demands and claims of the Gospel and Church of Christ, and to promote the true welfare and prosperity of the congregation.

Early led by the grace of God to devote myself to his service, and inwardly moved, I humbly trust, by the Holy Ghost to take upon me the office of the ministry in the christian church, I have sought to combine in my pastoral labors the character of a faithful and affectionate teacher of the Word, with that of an open and unshrinking advocate of the claims of the Church of God. Under no circumstances

have I found it necessary to separate fidelity to Christ, from fidelity to the Church which he purchased with his own blood. And it has been my effort and object, in urging you to seek salvation through the cross and grace of the Redeemer, to impress upon you that this salvation is truly and scripturally sought through the ministrations, and sacraments, and instructions of that spiritual society of which he proclaims himself the divine head and founder. Devoutly do I bless God for having cast my lot among you, and made me the humble instrument of leading many of you to that Cross which is the sole fountain of pardon, grace and life to men, and of strengthening and animating others “in the ways of God’s laws, and in the works of his commandments.” If in doing this I have made them firm and decided friends of the Church, inspired them with stronger confidence in her scriptural and evangelical character, and rendered her the object of that distinctive and cordial attachment which promptly bends to her authority, sustains her institutions, and loves her, not for the sake of the teacher, but for herself as the spouse and body of Christ, I may still farther rejoice that I have imparted views and principles which, in this age of ecclesiastical distractions, will give stability to your connection with the Church, and will satisfy you that consistent adherence to her sacred fold is fully compatible with vital godliness on one side, and with true gospel charity on the other.

And now, brethren, in taking leave of you as a Pastor, let me venture to offer the counsels which my heart so strongly prompts. Most affectionately would I renew my frequent exhortation to all of you, to seek the salvation of your souls as the primary object of life to every individual, whether young or old, lest you incur, according to God’s holy word, the penalty of eternal separation from Him and his in the world to come.

Let me urge every christian professor to be zealously engaged in doing works meet for repentance, that when the Lord of the vineyard cometh to take account of his servants, each one of you may be welcomed to his favour, with “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Let me exhort you to cherish, as a congregation, the harmony, love and peace, which have so long characterised the parish, in the full persuasion of their incalculable efficiency as the handmaids of true religion. Let me counsel you ever to be the liberal friends and supporters of the institutions of the Church, not from temporary impulses of feeling or prejudice, but on the sober and solid principles of christian duty and christian faithfulness. Let me advise you to conform steadily to the doctrines, usages, and appointments of the Church, whose true welfare is never likely to be promoted by deserting her courts, spurning her sacraments, or decrying her character, laws, or members. Let me beseech you to cultivate an enlightened attachment to her distinctive principles, and divinely constituted ministry, and to aim to exemplify, in your own characters and lives, the holy lessons which she, on the authority of Christ, enforces on all her members.

Finally, in the words of St. Paul, I exhort you, as ye have ever done, to “obey them that have to rule over you,” and to be the firm supporters of that lawful authority in the Church, which, duly exercised, is a shield of safety to all; while factious opposition, or withheld deference, will involve the congregation in turmoils, or subject them to an interior tyranny, alike fatal to the interests of religion and to their own comfort. On that great foundation—other than which can no man lay, even Jesus Christ—I have sought to build you up as a part of his holy church. God, who giveth the increase, has been pleased

to crown my labours with some degree of success. In the increase of the communicants, and of the numbers baptised and confirmed, in the enlargement of our Sunday Schools, in the attendance on public worship, and in the increased liberality of the congregation to the institutions of the Church, are presented visible proofs that the divine blessing has not been withheld from us. Still more evident is it in the less visible testimony which many hearts can bear to the new experience, or the revived influence of that Divine Spirit who bends the soul to Christ, and moulds it into his blessed image.

In surrendering a prosperous parish, and so many friends, for the new and untried station to which I go, I am influenced, as I need not attempt to persuade you, by the powerful claims of that duty to God and his Church, which often exacts of us the sacrifice of feeling and friendships to discharge it faithfully. It cannot be but that my heart will ever yearn over a flock endeared to me by so many associations, among whom unvarying affection and the firmest attachments have ever attended me and mine; and where Christ, our master, has been graciously pleased to set his seal to my ministry in the conversion and edification of many of its members. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

That the blessing of the Almighty may ever attend you, individually and as a congregation, and the Great Head of the Church vouchsafe ever to provide you with faithful and true shepherds, will be the earnest and constant prayer of one who, although no longer your Pastor, will rejoice always to subscribe himself,

Your affectionate friend,
and brother in Christ,

May 2d, 1839.

WILLIAM H. DE LANCEY.

